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AUTHOR Budzik, Jerome M.
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ABSTRACT

Good public relations can be achieved through positive contingencies and reinforcers. An administration and staff that stresses students' success will often make an enormous difference in the atmosphere of a school as well as in the pride of the students and the community in their school. (Author)

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BUILDING A POSITIVE SCHOOL IMAGE

by Jerome M. Budzik

Good public relations can be achieved through positive contingencies and reinforcers. An administration and staff that stresses students success will often make an enormous difference in the atmosphere of a school, and the pride of the students and community in its school.

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Education is a very human and efficient form of communicating knowledge. A sense of wonder emerges from the accumulation of details and facts of a discipline that triggers the creative process to new discoveries. It is a lack of confidence by educators to insist on positive discipline and verbal communication to students and the community that has brought criticism, hostility, distrust and chaotic confusion to our educational institutions. Educators must act, communicate, and initiate change because of positive educational reasons and not because we are frightened.

In a study of behavior in small groups Eaglen (1973) undertook to ascertain whether more verbalization would occur as a result of positive responses than would occur with either negative or no responses. The only group showing significantly lower rate of verbalization was the ignored group receiving no response at all. This research is supportive of similar findings, suggesting that verbal dynamics are as important as social dynamics in a group.

If we carry these findings one step further and add Skinner's (1973) concepts of rewarding students by responding to student's success and partial success rather than his failures, educators can help straighten out a disruptive environment with expressions of approval and success by administrators, teachers and peers.

Administrators can have enormous influence on the atmosphere of their school buildings. Some suggestions that can develop positive student and staff pride in their school is to communicate to the community, parents, students and staff, students' success. The following are some

suggestions that educators can accomplish as positive reinforcement and contingencies to develop student and community pride in its school:

1. Design and implement a Student Services Center that delivers a total package of mental and physical health services to all youths it serves. (Ypsilanti High School Student Services Center has under its umbrella coordinated services of Mental Health, Physical Health, Counselors, Social Workers, Special Education Teacher Consultants, Young Mother's Worker and Diagnostician personnel working as a team delivering total services to its students.)

2. By encouraging programmed instruction that divides curriculum material into small parts and is administered on an individualized basis enormous differences can be made in the atmosphere of a classroom and the efficiency of instruction because it increases the frequency with which students enjoy the satisfaction of being right and supplying a valuable intrinsic reward in providing a indication of progress. The slow student is released from the frustration of moving on to materials for which he is not ready and the fast students escape the boredom of being forced to go too slow.

3. As educators we should be willing to predict what we believe students in general will need to know, taking the individual student into account wherever possible using the techniques of programmed instruction as an appropriate classroom tool. Students will develop a positive self-esteem because they have developed useful, productive and necessary, knowledge and skills to be successful in their career.

As curriculum designers we need to maintain a balance between relevant materials of the present as well as the need to take into account educational experience necessary to learn from the past and provide for the future achievement in a student's life. If we do not maintain this balance

a gap will be created between generations, expectation, expected competencies of society that will create an educational crisis.

4. An administration that projects a positive attitude of "canness" and involves the staff and students in the decision making process can induce high moral among all participants.

5. Provide in-service training for the staff to create programmed instruction, individualized instruction and techniques where appropriate.

6. Institute Capsule Night, College Night, Curriculum Night and an evening school day where parents can be invited to participate with their students in class.

7. "Glad" notes should be constructed and made available to all staff to communicate to parents positive accomplishments in the classroom to parents.

Administrators can send "Glad" notes to all students who earn the honor roll, receive scholarships, are members of the National Honor Society and any other student accomplishments.

8. Honor Roll list can be posted on bulletin boards and published in the newspaper. Graduate students who have made their college honor rolls can also be posted.

9. Fact sheets of student accomplishments can be constructed periodically and sent to parents with their report cards as well as distributed to the community and news media.

10. Parents scheduled visitation to the school and a scheduled open administrative hour for parents who wish to visit and discuss school problems.

11. Student and teacher handbooks need to be constructed and updated. Information such as the school philosophy and objectives, general policies and procedures, student services, media center, purchasing and

finance, maintenance, and reasonable rules and regulations, etc., should be spelled out so that all participants have a common base to operate.

I am sure there are many creative ways one can involve parents in school activities so that they feel that they are a part of the schools. Elementary schools have involved parents in school activities for many years. But secondary schools have neglected good public relation techniques and often struggle to be understood because of the lack of community involvement.

Positive public relations and communications need to be continuously stressed to develop positive school pride by the community, students and staff it serves.

Ashley Montague states "that the approach to truth must be through education - education conceived as the science, the theory, the art, the practice of human relations plus the critical ability to use one's mind critically." However these words need to produce actions of willingness to cooperate, of trust and trust worthiness, of orderly processes in the mobilization of all respectable human forces to work towards the achievement of common goals and reasonable agreed-upon-objectives based upon a sound foundation of ecological principles.

Man knows himself by meditation and self reflection. Man is himself by what he acts and does and creates. Educators must forge curriculum experiences that provide a balance of past, present and future experiences that make the students aware that they are participants now and they will play an integral part in this one world. The success of the great educational dream for all persons will depend on what educators act, do, and create in terms of mans positive qualities of living in harmony with himself, his fellow men and his environment. With limited resources, we cannot afford not to develop

each person to his fullest potential. Positive public relations and communication can be a potent force in accomplishing these objectives.

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